



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT LAKESIDE MARINA RESORT

For
CONSTRUCTION of an ADDITIONAL RETAINING WALL and
DISCHARGE of FILL MATERIAL BEHIND WALL

Project Description:

A new 111' long x 10" thick retaining wall at a variable height (8' to 10' from lakebed) connecting to existing adjacent walls, will be located 60' in front of the existing retaining wall. Approved fill material will be installed behind the proposed wall. Within this depth of fill material, a filtration water treatment device will be installed to collect the flow from the 16" MDT highway culvert and after treatment, discharging to the lake through a new outlet.

This device will also include an overflow for seasonal high-volume flow. Manholes for maintenance access are within the surface of the (paved) parking area.

This proposed parking area provides an additional 20 parking spaces within an area of high use, and a driving lane connector to two adjacent parking areas, to reduce interaction with busy summer traffic on US Highway 93.

At the highway edge of the project, a 5' wide sidewalk will be constructed on Marina property, continuous across the entire Marina highway frontage.

A landscaping strip will separate the sidewalk from the highway guard rail, and another landscaping strip will separate the 5' wide sidewalk from the parking area.

The 60' wide parking area will consist of two aisles and a 21' driving lane, with an additional landscaping buffer strip at the lake edge.

Landscaping will consist of native shrubs in a graveled surface bed.

Description of and the reason for, the major variance being requested:

The variance is requested for an additional lakeshore retaining wall, 111' long x 10' high, and the amount of fill material needed (2,394 cubic yards) to reclaim a portion, 60' x 111' (at the widest) or 6,465 square feet of an existing man-made channel:

The proposed project is located at the site of the former Rosario's restaurant. Removal of the old restaurant structure exposed diminished water quality at the end of this long man-made channel (please see photos). An ongoing need for a safe path for pedestrian travel along the busy highway and for additional parking in the immediate area, and a desire for a transition from the highway edge, i.e. landscaping contributed to the owner's proposal.

The proposed project is adding much needed parking to this very popular area within Lakeside, on the lakeshore side of the highway. This project accomplishes two other important tasks: Creating a 5' wide sidewalk, a much-needed, safe pedestrian connection along a very busy section of U.S. Highway 93, in Lakeside, Montana.

Also, this project addresses a need for stormwater treatment at a location where an MDT culvert discharges into a very shallow portion of a man-made waterway on the shoreline of Flathead Lake by adding a filtration treatment system to this water that is currently discharged into the lake.

This project will also provide a 10' wide safe dock/access walkway at the west edge of relocated boat slips, for Marina, Harbor Grille, and Far West boat customers.

Description of Existing Conditions:

The project site is a long, shallow dredged channel reaching almost to the highway right-of-way, at 104' to 111' wide by 146' long on the north side, and 230' long on the south side. Its length consists of exposed, bare ground during the low water season, except for a pool of stagnant water at the far west end. (The former restaurant hid this condition).

This man-made channel is made completely of retaining walls, averaging 8' high from the lakebed. The walls were reconstructed after 2006 and are in very good condition.

The lakeshore surface is a combination of paved parking areas, gravel buffer strips adjacent to retaining walls and bare soil next to highway edge; no vegetation present.

From Flathead County Lakeshore Regulations:

Chapter 4.3.F.1.b.

Filling of a portion of a lake may have adverse effects due to destruction of an aquatic environment, loss of habitat for fish and wildlife, creation of an unnatural shoreline, creation of steep bench areas and alteration of current flows and wave actions.

According to a consultation from US Fish & Wildlife Service (Section 7), the threatened species that may occur within our proposed project location or may be affected by our proposed project are:

Canada Lynx, Grizzly Bear, North American Wolverine, Bull Trout, and the plant species, Spalding's Catchfly. The one Critical Habitat listed as "wholly or partially within our project area is for Bull Trout. A further determination of this will be made within the approval of the US Army Corps of Engineers NWP 39 permit application.

Their initial verbal response was that it was highly unlikely that this project location contained critical habitat for any of these species.

This project's proposal to fill a portion of an earlier dredged channel will not "create an unnatural shoreline", but will instead restore a portion of this artificial harbor, and will correct a long, shallow channel that does not have good water circulation.

Chapter 4.3.F.2.e.

Fill projects for the purpose of expanding existing land areas shall not be permitted.

This proposed fill will expand the land area close to the edge of US Highway 93, but this project's goal is to address a number of other issues at this location: to shorten the channel that is long and shallow and apart from the normal movement of lake water, and to provide a location for the latest filtration technology for an MDT culvert discharge (last

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year, community members brought this to the attention of Flathead County officials as a concern). Both serve to improve lake water quality.

With this expanded land area, 20 additional parking spaces will be added to a very high-demand area of summer recreation, and pedestrians will have all-season safe access along the highway.

Please refer to vicinity map to see other existing sidewalk and the nearby attractions. This proposed development of additional sidewalk is a priority goal and a long-awaited reality for many in Lakeside.

This additional land area also provides space for three landscaping strips between the highway and the lakeshore.

Chapter 4.3.F.2.f.

Discharge of fill material directly into the lake shall not be permitted.

An additional lakeshore retaining wall will be constructed (concrete, see wall detail drawing) within the open, empty channel during low lake water season. Only approved backfill will be placed behind the barrier of this new wall (Chapter 4.3.E.2.c.5.) but having no interaction with, and separated from lake water.

From Chapter 4:

Criteria for Issuance of a Permit:

4.1 Policy Criteria:

This proposed action shall not, during either its construction or its utilization:

Materially diminish water quality:

As stated previously, one of the main goals of this fill proposal is to safeguard and even improve water quality through the filtration of stormwater drainage discharge into the lake, and to shorten a long shallow (previously dredged) channel to improve lake water circulation. Therefore, this project will not materially diminish water quality.

Materially diminish habitat for fish or wildlife:

As evident in the attached photos, the lakebed at this location is mostly devoid of any surface lakeshore vegetation or any armament or rock that would provide habitat, and is made up of mostly level, smooth soils. A very busy highway borders the project site and in the summer months with full pool water levels, an established marina is in operation. The potential for habitation of threatened species at this location as being unlikely. Therefore, this project will not materially diminish habitat for fish or wildlife.

Interfere with navigation or other lawful recreation:

This proposal creates improvements within a functioning commercial marina facility, recently remodeled (2019) to better serve the community. The proposed twenty additional parking spaces on the east side of the highway will lessen the number of highway crossings that patrons of the Marina, the Harbor Grille, the adjacent public boat launch, and the Far West Cruise (and summer concerts and food festivals) need to make from the overflow parking lot on the west side of the highway. These proposed improvements, including the

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extension of Lakeside’s sidewalks, serve to enhance a facility already dedicated to providing proper lake access and services for boat users and other visitors.

Create a public nuisance:

This proposal was put together to alleviate a few nuisances, concerns expressed by members of the community. During the 2019 remodeling, demolition of old structures, construction of improvements to the existing restaurant, the fueling station, restrooms and convenience store, the visible US Highway 93 culvert discharge into the lake was brought up. Comments were made about the long, open (and ugly) channel. There was a demand for more onsite parking spaces. Customers mentioned “poor curb appeal—can’t there be some sort of landscaping?” Our local nonprofit, the Lakeside Community Development Foundation has had a long term goal of sidewalks or pedestrian path, continuous through the center of Lakeside. Montana Department of Transportation would not allow the highway right-of-way to be used for this sidewalk, and our Flathead County Commissioners wanted the owner to build the sidewalk within his own (Marina) property, assuming all costs of construction and maintenance.

It was out of all these deficiencies that the owner came up with this entire project proposal.

Create a visual impact discordant with natural scenic values, as determined by the governing body, where such values from the predominant landscape elements:

The surrounding characteristics of this project location are that of commercial buildings: a bank, a motel, a gas station, a tavern, a business center; to the north, an open, narrow shoreline with a public boat launch, private beaches and a public beach and dock. Because of the nature of the marina touching the lakeshore, the owner has chosen the aesthetic of keeping all built forms as minimal as possible, either in height, mass, or materials. Because the surroundings are somewhat barren, the owner has chosen to incorporate landscaping into the finishing of this proposed project. This includes native shrubs within gravel beds and seasonal large scale planters along the property edges (all landscaping features allow a view to the water).

Alter the characteristics of the shoreline:

This specific portion of Flathead lake is not a natural shoreline but was, in the past, altered by means of dredging and filling (please refer to vicinity maps to see the natural shoreline contour, and the carved out rectangular channel of the project site).

The owner proposes what is better described as reclaiming a portion of the shoreline.

Alternatives to the proposed project, which would not require a major variance:

The Flathead County Lakeshore 2006 Settlement Agreement with the owner of Lakeside Marina (p. 6, item #17) allows for replacement of the elevated floor deck structure within the original Rosario’s restaurant outline (non-compliant, grandfathered). A replacement of this original structure would not address the issue that has been evident (even in the 2004 Joint Application) of the “shallow man-made waterway”.

There is no alternative to this proposal that would also create the described benefits of this current proposal. Members of the community, the surrounding business owners, and a local water quality watch group, are in favor of this proposal and its benefits. (Including

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the Flathead Lakeshore Protection Association and Lakeside Community Development Foundation).

These benefits are specifically: shortening a long man-made channel to improve water circulation (not stagnation) and to intercept impeded water, for filtration/treatment before discharging back into the lake.

Providing walkways on the east (marina) side and the west (highway side) enhance safe pedestrian access; 20 additional onsite parking space add up to fewer persons having to cross the busy highway during peak seasons. Landscaping strips improve not only the aesthetics of this location, but also provide additional erosion control.

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